JULY 2008 • VOLUME 2, ISSUE 7

Labour Market News

CENTRAL ALBERTA

Alberta Employment and Immigration

JOB SEEKERS

Beauty basics

Careers in personal care services

After working in the beauty industry for 20 years, Michele Blauel still has a passion for her job.

A hairstylist by trade, Blauel is also trained to offer services such as facials, manicures and waxing. Working in the ever-evolving beauty industry keeps her career interesting and challenging.

"It's a great industry. It's really a lot of fun," says Blauel, who owns Techniques Hair Therapy & Day Spa in Red Deer. "I love being with the clients and helping them look and feel good. I gave a lady a hair cut the other day and she said it was like getting a big bottle of feel good."

Career options

Besides hairstylist, other jobs in this field include esthetician, nail technician, massage therapist and electrologist. Each job has different training requirements, but in most cases a certificate or diploma from a vocational school or post-secondary institute is required. While these careers require different skill sets, they all have one thing in common—there is a strong focus on customer service.

"You have to love people. You're around customers all day," says Corinne Sim, who owns six beauty salons in Red Deer including Chatters, Green Apple and Safari. "Communication skills are critical. You have to hear and understand what your client wants. Some customers can be demanding."

Continued on page 2

Hairstylist Michele Blauel (left) has worked in the personal care industry for 20 years.

A good immigrant integration plan can help employers retain workers.

EMPLOYERS

Integrating immigrants into the workplace

Over the past five years, the number of new Canadians arriving in Central Alberta has slowly been on the rise. More and more landed immigrants, temporary foreign workers and refugees are arriving in the region every day.

The influx of newcomers is good news for employers who continue to face a shortage of workers. But it also brings challenges, as companies look for ways to help new Canadians successfully integrate into the workplace and the community.

Language barriers and cultural differences are a few issues that may arise, but employers who are willing to invest a little time and effort on integration initiatives will see rewards in the end.

"A lot of employers see the challenges but they don't see what they're going to gain from it," says Jan Underwood, public awareness coordinator for the Central Alberta Refugee Effort (CARE). "Once a newcomer feels comfortable at work, employers often find that their work ethic is extremely high. They're extremely loyal and hard working."

Underwood teaches a public awareness program through CARE to help employers with cultural diversity training. Demand is so high, CARE recently hired a second worker for rural areas around Central Alberta.

Continued on page 9
See page 8 for a related Best Practice story.

IN THIS ISSUE

Immigrant integration 1
Personal care services 1-3
Profile: Massage therapist 4
Work it out: Child care 5-6
Labour market survey 7
Employer Best Practice 8
Employer Resources 9
Job Seeker Resources 10

This publication has been prepared for Alberta Employment and Immigration with the support of the Government of Canada.

Find us online at WWW.EMPLOYMENT.ALBERTA.CA/CENTRAL

NEXT ISSUE...
Drafting technicians

JOB SEEKER FEATURE STORY

Careers that never go out of style

Continued from page 1

Workers in demand

Workers in this industry are often employed in salons, spas and clinics. Some local employers are having a hard time finding trained workers, especially hairstylists.

"I've been recruiting overseas for stylists. I have four Koreans here right now and I'm getting four Filipino stylists in September," says Sim, who employs 80 hairstylists, 20 estheticians and three registered massage therapists at her salons.

Getting started

If you're interested in learning about the various careers in personal care services, a great way to get your foot in the door is to start as a receptionist. Most salons, spas and clinics hire receptionists to book appointments and sell products. This is a great way to see what the work environment is like before investing in your education.

"Right now I have three staff in hair school who started with us three years ago as receptionists," notes Sim.

Working conditions

There is an opportunity to work full-time, part-time or on a casual basis. Positions may require day, evening or weekend shifts.

In Central Alberta, women make up a high percentage of some jobs, such as hairstylists and estheticians. Sim says these jobs are popular with moms, who can usually arrange flexible working hours to suit their family's lifestyle.

In some cases, workers are employed on a contract basis and they can set their own work schedules.

Physical demands

Jobs in the industry can be physically demanding. Hairstylists, for example, may stand for eight to 12 hours a day. Estheticians and massage therapists are also on their feet for most services.

Good upper body strength may also be required for jobs such as hairstyling or massage therapy, where arms are used to do the work.

Professional development

Ongoing training is highly encouraged in this industry so staff can keep up with the latest styles, treatments and techniques.

"It helps to keep their skills up, to keep them excited and motivated and to grow in their career," says Blauel.

It also gives them the opportunity to offer new services to clients and boost their income. For example, an esthetician or hair stylist could take a course to become a make-up artist. Training is usually available in Red Deer, but travel may be required to attend industry-sponsored events. Some employers have an education fund to help staff cover their training costs.

Advancement

There is plenty of room to advance in this industry. With experience, workers can move into supervisory or management roles, or they could start their own business.

Benefits, perks and wages

Besides the group insurance benefits that some employers offer, workers in the beauty industry often have access to perks like free hair cuts and discounts on products and services.

Pay varies depending on the job and a person's education and experience. Workers in this industry are usually paid a commission for services, which increases as they gain experience and build up a client base. They can also earn commission for selling beauty products, so being a good salesperson is helpful. Tips can also greatly increase a worker's income.

Creativity counts

For some jobs, such as hairstylist or esthetician, employers look for people who are have a creative flair and an interest in beauty trends, says Sim. "It's such a changing industry. They should be fashionable and trendy and care about what's in style," she says.

Employers also look for people who can work in a cooperative team environment.

Rewards

For many workers in personal care services, providing clients with a relaxing, enjoyable experience is the ultimate goal. "Helping people look and feel good is rewarding," says Sim. "We strive for a five-star experience for all guests."

PERSONAL CARE SERVICES

HOURS

Salons, spas and clinics are open days, evenings and weekends. Shifts could change each week, or staff could be put on a set rotation. Jobs vary from full-time to part-time and casual.

WAGES

Wages vary widely depending on education, experience and the job. Visit www.alis.gov.ab.ca and check WAGEinfo by entering a job title in the keyword search. In this industry, workers may be paid on a fee-for-service basis instead of hourly, so attracting and retaining a loyal client base is essential to earning a good salary.

WHERE TO FIND WORK

Look for potential employers in the business directory under categories like Hair Salons, Hair Removal, Beauty Salons, Beauty Treatments, Spas or Massage Therapists. Jobs are often posted in local newspapers and online at www.jobbank.gc.ca.

JOB SEEKER FEATURE STORY

Careers that never go out of style

Continued from page 1

Workers in demand

Workers in this industry are often employed in salons, spas and clinics. Some local employers are having a hard time finding trained workers, especially hairstylists.

"I've been recruiting overseas for stylists. I have four Koreans here right now and I'm getting four Filipino stylists in September," says Sim, who employs 80 hairstylists, 20 estheticians and three registered massage therapists at her salons.

Getting started

If you're interested in learning about the various careers in personal care services, a great way to get your foot in the door is to start as a receptionist. Most salons, spas and clinics hire receptionists to book appointments and sell products. This is a great way to see what the work environment is like before investing in your education.

"Right now I have three staff in hair school who started with us three years ago as receptionists," notes Sim.

Working conditions

There is an opportunity to work full-time, part-time or on a casual basis. Positions may require day, evening or weekend shifts.

In Central Alberta, women make up a high percentage of some jobs, such as hairstylists and estheticians. Sim says these jobs are popular with moms, who can usually arrange flexible working hours to suit their family's lifestyle.

In some cases, workers are employed on a contract basis and they can set their own work schedules.

Physical demands

Jobs in the industry can be physically demanding. Hairstylists, for example, may stand for eight to 12 hours a day. Estheticians and massage therapists are also on their feet for most services.

Good upper body strength may also be required for jobs such as hairstyling or massage therapy, where arms are used to do the work.

Professional development

Ongoing training is highly encouraged in this industry so staff can keep up with the latest styles, treatments and techniques.

"It helps to keep their skills up, to keep them excited and motivated and to grow in their career," says Blauel.

It also gives them the opportunity to offer new services to clients and boost their income. For example, an esthetician or hair stylist could take a course to become a make-up artist. Training is usually available in Red Deer, but travel may be required to attend industry-sponsored events. Some employers have an education fund to help staff cover their training costs.

Advancement

There is plenty of room to advance in this industry. With experience, workers can move into supervisory or management roles, or they could start their own business.

Benefits, perks and wages

Besides the group insurance benefits that some employers offer, workers in the beauty industry often have access to perks like free hair cuts and discounts on products and services.

Pay varies depending on the job and a person's education and experience. Workers in this industry are usually paid a commission for services, which increases as they gain experience and build up a client base. They can also earn commission for selling beauty products, so being a good salesperson is helpful. Tips can also greatly increase a worker's income.

Creativity counts

For some jobs, such as hairstylist or esthetician, employers look for people who are have a creative flair and an interest in beauty trends, says Sim. "It's such a changing industry. They should be fashionable and trendy and care about what's in style," she says.

Employers also look for people who can work in a cooperative team environment.

Rewards

For many workers in personal care services, providing clients with a relaxing, enjoyable experience is the ultimate goal. "Helping people look and feel good is rewarding," says Sim. "We strive for a five-star experience for all guests."

PERSONAL CARE SERVICES

HOURS

Salons, spas and clinics are open days, evenings and weekends. Shifts could change each week, or staff could be put on a set rotation. Jobs vary from full-time to part-time and casual.

WAGES

Wages vary widely depending on education, experience and the job. Visit www.alis.gov.ab.ca and check WAGEinfo by entering a job title in the keyword search. In this industry, workers may be paid on a fee-for-service basis instead of hourly, so attracting and retaining a loyal client base is essential to earning a good salary.

WHERE TO FIND WORK

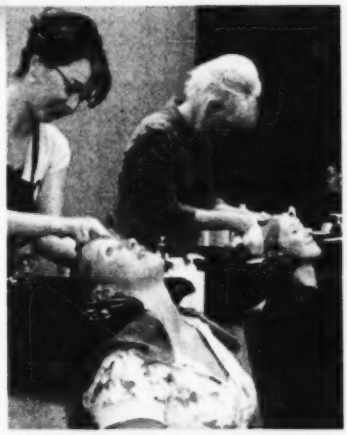
Look for potential employers in the business directory under categories like Hair Salons, Hair Removal, Beauty Salons, Beauty Treatments, Spas or Massage Therapists. Jobs are often posted in local newspapers and online at www.jobbank.gc.ca.

Look good, feel good jobs
Personal care services

JOB SEEKERS Careers TO CONSIDER

There are many different career options in personal care services. Each job requires diffferent skills and different levels of education. Employers typically require workers in this field to have training from a vocational or post-secondary school, and ongoing training is expected to keep up with the latest treatments and techniques. Below are three common jobs in the region.

HAIRSTYLIST (NOC 6271)



Hairstylists shampoo, cut, colour and style hair to suit a client's face and lifestyle. They may suggest styling aids and hairstyles, analyze hair and scalp and suggest treatments. Hairstylists stand all day and must constantly lift their arms to do cuts and treatments. Hairstylist is a mandatory trade in Alberta (see www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca for details). Students can take a hairstyling program through a vocational school and then complete a 1,400-hour apprenticeship at a salon in order to receive their journeyperson certificate. Or they can start as an apprentice at a salon. The apprenticeship is two years long and includes a minimum 1,400 hours on-the-job training each year, combined with 10-weeks technical training each year, also resulting in a journeyperson certificate. According to the 2007 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey, hairstylists had an average salary of $43,100 a year.

Training: Marvel College in Red Deer (www.mccollege.ca) offers a 36-week Hairstyling program . The Academy of Professional Hair Design in Red Deer (www.academyofprofessionalhairdesign.com) offers a 40-week Beauty Culture program.

ESTHETICIAN (NOC 6482)

Estheticians provide facial and body treatments. They assess the client's skin condition and provide treatments such as peels and masks. They may also apply make-up, do manicures and pedicures, remove body or facial hair using wax and provide other specialized treatments such as aromatherapy, body wraps or stone therapy massage. Estheticians often work in beauty salons and spas or do freelance work. Estheticians are not regulated in Alberta, but most employers require esthetics training. Wages vary depending on location, services offered and the esthetician's reputation. They may be paid a salary or commission. In 2005, Albertans in the Estheticians, Electrologists and Related Occupations working full-time or part-time earned from $11,100 to $45,500 a year. The average salary was $19,600 a year.

Training: Marvel College in Red Deer (www.mccollege.ca) offers esthetics training programs of various lengths. Sultana's Beauty Clinic and School in Red Deer (www.sultanasbeautyclinic: ıdschool.ca) offers a 17-week Esthetician program. The Academy of Professional Hair Design in Red Deer (www.academyofprofessionalhairdesign.com) offers a 900-hour Esthetics certificate.

MASSAGE THERAPIST (NOC 3235)

Massage therapists relieve pain and stress by massaging the body's soft tissues and joints. They may be trained in different massage techniques, such as rehabilitation, sports and relaxation massage. They work in clinics, spas or in health care. Some provide treatment at the client's home or office. Working as a therapist can be strenuous and requires standing for long periods of time. Massage therapists are not regulated in Alberta, although many employers prefer therapists to have formal training and be registered through an organization like the Alberta Registered Massage Therapists Society (www.armts.com). According to the 2007 Alberta Wage and Salary Survey, therapists charge from $30 to $50 for a half-hour treatment and $50 to $80 for a one-hour treatment. Therapists who contract their services to clinics or spas receive a percentage of the billings, usually around 60 per cent.

Training: The Alberta Institute of Massage in Red Deer (www.albertainstituteofmassage.com) offers a 25 week or 52 week Massage Therapy Certificate program and a 36 week or 52 week Advanced Massage Therapy Diploma program. The Northern Institute of Massage Therapy in Red Deer (www.nimt.ca) offers a 28-week Basic Relaxation Massage program and a 40 week Advanced Therapeutic Massage program.

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A ...

Massage Therapist

Registered massage therapist Pete Swales has been practicing massage therapy for 14 years.

How did you start in this career?

I had left a career with a local police station and was looking for a change. My wife, Crystal, asked me if I would attend a couples massage course with her. During the first class I soon found that there was a lot more to massage than I ever realized. When I started massaging Crystal's back, I could feel her muscles relax, her breathing change, and I was hooked. That was 14 years ago. I signed up for massage therapy school and upon graduation, I started working for a local clinic. After a short period of time, I leased a small clinic, and started what is now Massage Above All Incorp. Realizing the inevitable growth in the health market, I built my dream, a 2,500 square foot clinic with many treatment rooms, fountains, and a team of registered massage therapists (RMTs) and wholistic practitioners offering a wide array of alternative health modalities from Swedish relaxation to Gin-shin-do, Thai and Reiki, and of course a two room area devoted to couples massage.

What do you enjoy about your job?

The most enjoyable aspect of my day is seeing clients leave feeling healthy, relaxed and knowing we had a part in making their day a little brighter.

Does your job affect your lifestyle?

Crystal, and our son, are now RMTs and our daughter will be finished her RMT course by the time this goes to press. So does this affect my lifestyle? Well, it *is* my lifestyle, a lifestyle that allows and encourages a healthy and supportive life. Not a bad choice!

What are some of the challenges of your job?

One of the challenges that can come with this career is the starting point. When I have a new therapist start, they have to know that at the beginning it can be somewhat challenging building up a clientele base. This is a personal and intimate art that takes some time to build client trust. Once you have that, then the referrals come in and with hard work, it can be hard to find room for all your clients. Our clients give us a hard time if we take a day off.

What are your career goals?

One of my goals is to add teaching to my resumé, perhaps not only to teach massage but to teach RMTs how to build their practice and to attract clients and income to their business.

What advice would you give to someone looking at this career?

I strongly suggest you seek out a clinic or RMT that will take the time to talk to you, answer your questions, find out where they took their training, then seek out schools that teach massage and be sure to be comfortable with the course curriculum and their hours. Some schools offer weekend classes and others have full-time classes. As a practice, I have only hired therapists who have come to our clinic and presented themselves as someone who has a passion for this field.

CAREER PROFILE

Pete Swales

Swales is a registered massage therapist and owns his own clinic, Massage Above All Incorp., in Red Deer. The clinic offers a variety of treatment modalities, from relaxation and therapeutic massage to reflexology, Reiki and Thai massage. There is a high demand for the clinic's services. "There are times when we are booked up to three and four weeks in advance," says Swales. After 14 years in the industry, Swales says massage therapy is more than a job, it's a lifestyle. "For me, one of the most important factors in building a successful career in massage therapy is compassion and a desire to promote health and wellness," he says.

Working as a MASSAGE THERAPIST (NOC 3235)

Wages	Most therapists are paid on a commission basis, and with massage therapy averaging $60 per hour in Central Alberta, it can be very rewarding, says Swales. "However, one must bear in mind you are only paid for hours actually with clients, so you need to network and build your client base. Most of the therapists at my clinic choose to handle six clients in a shift," he says.
Education	According to the Massage Therapist Association of Alberta (www.mtaalberta.com), massage programs in the province vary from 250 hours to 2200 hours in length. See page 3 for a list of Red Deer massage therapy schools.
Specialties	Most therapists specialize in certain methods of treatment, called modalities. Training is available in areas such as relaxation, therapeutic, sports, infant, pregnancy and deep tissue massage.
Regulations	Massage therapists are not regulated in Alberta. Some municipalities require therapists to be licensed under local bylaws or to provide an annual police security clearance.

Finding **child** care ...

Make an informed choice

TIPS FOR WORKING PARENTS **work it out**

In Alberta, 65 per cent of women and 95 per cent of men with children under six years old are in the workforce.

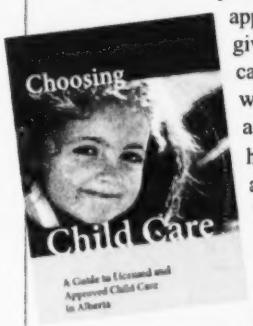
For these working parents, finding quality child care can be a difficult task. They want their child to be happy and safe, in an environment where they can learn and grow.

What's best for your family?

One of the first challenges for parents is to decide what type of child care will work best for their family. They have a variety of options to consider, from day care centres and family day homes to kin care, private babysitters or nannies (see sidebar at right).

Each option has its own advantages and disadvantages. Before choosing, parents should do their research and ask a lot of questions. There are plenty of resources available to help them make an informed decision.

Karen Thompson, regional manager of Early Childhood and Prevention Initiatives for Central Alberta Child and Family Services, recommends parents read *Choosing Child Care: A Guide to Licensed and Approved Child Care in Alberta.* The 12-page booklet is available online (www.child.alberta.ca/home/557.cfm) and is filled with valuable tips and advice to help parents pick a program that suits their needs.



"Whether you're using government regulated and approved care or private care, the booklet gives you really good questions to ask care providers—and ask yourself—about which type of care fits with your needs as a parent," says Thompson. "Every family has different needs. It has to fit for them as a family."

There are many things to consider, from the hours of operation and staff qualifications to the cost and the program size.

Another important consideration is whether or not a child care provider is licensed by Alberta Children and Youth Services (ACYS). Licensed day cares and family day homes must meet certain health and safety standards. Private babysitters and nannies, while a great alternative, are not regulated and it's up to parents to monitor these services.

Before making a decision, talk to or visit different child care providers and ask lots of questions. ACYS has a Child Care Checklist and Telephone Interview Planner online that parents can use as a guideline (www.child.alberta.ca/home/727.cfm).

Start your search early

In Central Alberta, there are often waiting lists for child care programs, so don't start your search at the last minute. "Some parents have told us it's taking them three months to find child care and for others, the wait has been up to one year," says Thompson.

OPTIONS TO CONSIDER

DAY CARE CENTRES

Day care centres provide care for groups of children under seven years old. They may offer care full-time, part-time or on a drop-in basis. In Alberta, day care centres must be licensed by Alberta Children's Services and meet standards set by the province. Certain staff to child ratios must be met, depending on the age of the children in care. Staff are required to meet various training certifications.

FAMILY DAY HOMES

Family day homes provide child care from private residences. A family day home provider can care for a maximum of six children under the age of 11, including their own. Approved family day homes are screened and monitored by family day home agencies under contract with the local Child and Family Service Authority and must follow certain standards of care. Not all day homes choose to go through the approval process or work through an agency.

KIN CHILD CARE

Kin Child Care offers low and middle income families the opportunity to pay a relative to care for their children. This program offers a flexible alternative for families who live in rural areas and/or work non-traditional hours. To be eligible for funding, parents must be working, seeking work or going to post-secondary school. Children must be under seven years old and the relative must not live in the same household.

PRIVATE BABYSITTER/NANNY

Private babysitters can care for up to six children, including their own, without being licensed or approved. Subsidies for low income families are not available for private babysitters unless they are receiving Income Support through Alberta Employment and Immigration.

Wait lists are often longer in cities like Red Deer. "Rural communities tend to have vacancies more so than the urban areas," notes Thompson.

Parents may also find it difficult to find care for infants and toddlers, says Sandra Sims, child/family development worker for the Evergreen Parent Link Centre in Rocky Mountain House. "The wait is especially long for children under 19 months. A lot of facilities don't provide child care any more for under 19 months," says Sims.

To reduce wait times, Alberta Children and Youth Services has introduced several initiatives to create new child care spaces. By the end of the 2008, the Space Creation Innovation fund is expected to open over 500 new child care spaces in Central Alberta. The province's goal is to create 14,000 more child care spaces across Alberta by 2011.

Child care subsidies

In Alberta, the cost of child care varies between communities. For full-time care in Central Alberta, family day

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

homes charge around $500 to $600 a month, while day care centres charge around $800 a month, says Thompson.

There are various government subsidies available to help keep child care costs reasonable for parents:

- ☑ Fees for licensed day cares and day homes are subsidized for low to middle income families. The maximum subsidy is currently $607 a month, which will increase to $628 per month in September.
- ☑ The preschool Kin Child Care subsidy will increase from $317 to $400 per month starting in September.
- ☑ In some cases, Child and Family Services will assist with the extraordinary costs of care and supports for a child with special needs.
- ☑ Two new subsidies for low to middle income families with children in Grades 1 to 6 will be introduced in September: A subsidy of $310 per month for families accessing licensed out-of-school care programs, and a Kin Child Care subsidy of $200 per month for families who have a relative looking after their school-age child.

Do you qualify?

To see if they qualify for financial assistance, parents can use an online subsidy estimator (www.child.alberta.ca/home/712.cfm) or they can contact their regional Child and Family Services Authority:

- ☑ Region 4 – Central Alberta Child and Family Services, (403) 341-8642
- ☑ Region 5 – East Central Alberta Child and Family Services (780) 871-6402

Other resources

Alberta Children and Youth Services' website (www.child.alberta.ca/home/587.cfm) has several helpful resources for parents considering their various child care options. A listing of day cares, day homes, nursery schools and out-of-school care facilities can be found online at www.parentlinkalberta.ca. Parents can also find contact information for regional Parent Link Centres at this website. Parent Link Centre staff can provide information and referrals to local child care programs.

"We can give parents a list of all the licensed facilities in town," says Sims, from the Parent Link Centre in Rocky Mountain House.

Child care information is also available through the Parent Information Line at 1-866-714-KIDS.

Coming events in Central Alberta

Central Alberta job fair

Meet face-to-face with employers who are hiring!
9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Wednesday, September 10
Westerner Park, 4847A-19 St., Red Deer
Free admission and parking
New to the job fair will be the Employer Corner, with local employers giving short presentations about their current job openings within their companies.

For more information about the job fair, go online to http://employment.alberta.ca/apps/cajf/jobseekers.asp.

Mature worker forum

In conjunction with the job fair, a Mature Worker Forum will be held Wednesday, September 10 at Westerner Park. There will be a variety of information sessions between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.
See next month's issue of the Labour Market News for full details.

Labour Force Survey Highlights

Second quarter 2008

In spite of an influx of around 4,700 workers to Central Alberta between April 2008 and June 2008, the labour market continues to be a challenge for employers.

The new pool of labour was easily incorporated into the economy as employment rose along with the growing labour force.

Between April and June, the number of employed increased 4,900, meaning job creation marginally outpaced the increase in the labour force. This helped keep the region's unemployment rate hovering between 3.1 and 3.3 per cent.

In comparison, Central Alberta's unemployment rate was 3.6 per cent for the same period in 2007. Approximately 8,800 people in the region were unemployed in the second quarter of 2008, compared to 9,800 in the second quarter of 2007.

Unemployment

Across Alberta, the unemployment rate hit 3.6 per cent in May, dropping to 3.3 per cent in June.

While Central Alberta's average unemployment rate remained relatively consistent in the second quarter, there were some notable different between the individual regions.

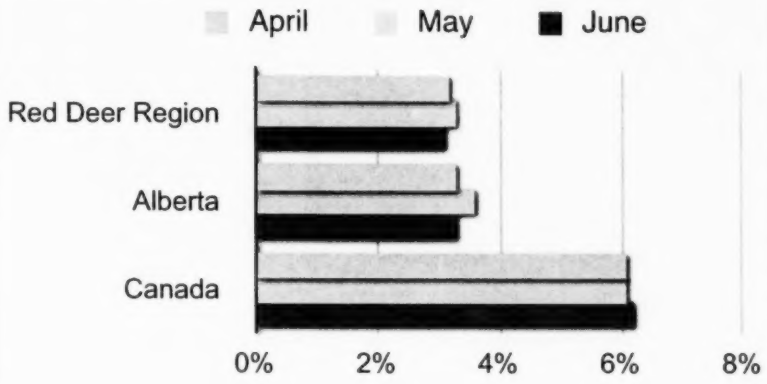
Camrose-Drumheller's unemployment rate dropped from 2.7 per cent in April to 2.3 per cent in June.

In comparison, the Red Deer region's unemployment rate sat at 3.9 per cent in June, while the Banff-Jasper-Rocky Mountain House unemployment rate was 3.7 per cent in June.

Across Alberta, a record 10,000 new jobs were created in June, sending the province's employment rate to a record 72.2 per cent. After a slowdown in drilling, the oil and gas sector was on the rebound thanks to sharp increases in natural gas and oil prices.

Mining and oil and gas, construction and agriculture sectors showed growth, while the forestry and manufacturing sectors continued to decline due to the high Canadian dollar and the U.S. housing slump.

Unemployment Rate



Region	Central Alberta Labour Force Statistics *				
	April	May	June	Q2 2008	Q2 2007
Labour force (000s)	271.7	273.5	276.4	**273.9**	274.3
Employed (000s)	262.9	264.4	267.8	**265**	264.9
Unemployed (000s)	8.8	9	8.7	**8.8**	9.8
Unemployment Rate	3.2%	3.3%	3.1%	**3.2%**	3.6%

NOTE: *Central Alberta data is combined data for the economic regions of Red Deer, Camrose - Drumheller, and Banff, Jasper and Rocky Mountain House. Unemployment figures for Banff-Jasper-Rocky Mountain House were calculated when suppressed. All data are unadjusted.

SOURCE: Alberta Employment, Immigration and Industry Labour Force Statistics, employment.alberta.ca/lmi (Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey data)

Labour Market Thermometer

Temporary Workers

Sunterra creates a welcoming environment

Best Practice FOR EMPLOYERS

With more than 100 temporary foreign workers now on staff, the workforce at Sunterra Meats has undergone a dramatic change in the past couple of years.

Starting in 2006, the company began bringing in workers, mostly from the Philippines and then Mexico, to deal with a labour shortage at its meat processing plants in Innisfail and Trochu. The long-term goal is to help all the workers immigrate to Canada to become permanent Sunterra employees.

Integrating the newcomers into the workplace has had its challenges. Some of the workers speak little or no English, and cultural differences have cropped up.

"Together with the regulatory people and our new staff, all of us had to learn on the fly. We learned as we went," says Paul Lindsay, the company's human resources health and safety manager.

Sunterra has undertaken several initiatives to welcome the foreign workers and help them adapt to life in Canada.

Welcome to Alberta

The company's efforts begin as soon as the temporary workers get off the plane. Sabrina Rivera, Sunterra's foreign worker coordinator, is there to pick them up. She immediately helps them with paperwork, such as health care and social insurance forms.

"Then I take them grocery shopping for things like bedding, towels and other necessities," says Rivera. Sunterra provides a cash advance if workers are short of money. A visit to the bank shows them how to deposit money and send it back home. In winter, warm clothing is provided to workers, who are often not prepared for the cold.

Overcoming workplace challenges

At the plant, workers are given an orientation. Rivera speaks Spanish, so she can help with some translation. Newcomers who speak English also help out—and sign language sometimes works, too. To help workers overcome the language barrier, Sunterra offers English as a Additional Language (EAL) training. It's partly business—workers need a certain level of English to immigrate through the Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program. But the company also believes language skills will help employees integrate into the community.

"If they don't speak English, it's very hard for them to be able to do things as simple as going to the bank or buying groceries. We try to help them to feel integrated into the community and be able to do those things without fear," says Rivera.

Besides language barriers, differences in workplace culture and communication styles also provided a learning curve for management. "The management team would come to me and ask 'How come the workers don't talk to us? How come they don't report things and how come they don't do this or that?'" says Lindsay.

Sunterra believes that providing a welcoming environment for temporary foreign workers will help with their long-term retention.

He arranged for management to attend a diversity workshop put on by the Central Alberta Refugee Effort, where they learned about cultural differences. "Part of the problem was culture and the second part was that the workers were so concerned they were going to be sent home. They don't want to draw attention to themselves, is what we found out through the training," says Lindsay.

Thanks to the training, he believes these issues have been resolved. "We try carefully to understand and appreciate the differences and try to adapt how we approach our work, being mindful of cultural differences," says Lindsay.

Management also has regular meetings with the workers to find out what they're thinking and if any issues need to be addressed.

Socialization

Making the newcomers feel welcome outside work is also important for Sunterra. The company is a member of the Innisfail Welcoming Communities Committee, which was formed after an influx of temporary foreign workers arrived at Sunterra and several other businesses in town (to learn more contact Donna Stewart-Wood with Welcoming Communities at 403-340-7001). The committee has created a list of resources for the newcomers, such as doctors, schools, churches and other services. They even have a town map written in Spanish.

Newcomers are also invited to participate in social activities at work, such as potlucks and the company basketball team. "Everything we did we included them," says Lindsay.

Retention

Sunterra continually works to keep its foreign workers around long after they've immigrated by understanding and working with them. "The labour force is not forecast to get any better. If we don't do things for all our workers, whether they are from another country or another province, they're going to migrate to the larger cities," notes Lindsay.

EMPLOYERS

Immigrant integration

Continued from page 1

Successful integration can be as simple as making newcomers feel welcome.

"Part of that is getting them involved in the rest of the group, not coddling them or catering to them, but just respecting that they're an equal professional doing their job like anybody else," says Rebekah McDermott, an employment specialist with the Career Assistance Network. She works with immigrants to help them enter the workforce. Between October and April, 133 immigrants sought help through the network.

Other initiatives employers can try:

- ☑ If language barriers exist, be patient and clear to avoid miscommunication. Consider providing English training, or refer workers to existing training in the community.
- ☑ Provide a workplace orientation (use a translator if necessary). Talk about the company's polices and expectations. Provide basic guidelines to how business is conducted—newcomers may be unfamiliar with North American business customs.
- ☑ Provide an orientation to community resources and services.
- ☑ Educate management and staff about cultural diversity. Awareness programs like the one offered through CARE can provide assistance.
- ☑ Utilize the services of immigrant and refugee centres.
- ☑ Set up a mentoring program to match with newcomers with existing employees and encourage teamwork.
- ☑ Ask for feedback from workers. They may not bring concerns forward on their own.
- ☑ Encourage newcomers to get involved in workplace and community social activities.

Many communities have welcoming programs for new Canadians but employers can also play a significant role in worker settlement and integration. Being proactive will be beneficial for employers in the long run.

"If employers are looking at both attracting and retaining employees, they really need to be strategic about what those employees' needs are," notes McDermott.

Online guide

How to Retain Your Foreign Workers in Alberta is an excellent guide to help employers develop a settlement and integration plan for foreign workers and landed immigrants.

FOR A BEST PRACTICE STORY ON A COMPANY THAT WELCOMES FOREIGN WORKERS, SEE PAGE 8.

By the numbers

- According to the 2006 Census, 1,785 immigrants moved to Red Deer between 2001 and 2006, up from the 1,000 in the five years prior.
- In Red Deer, 189 temporary foreign workers arrived in 2006. Businesses across the region have also brought in foreign workers.

EMPLOYER

Resources

Both federal and provincial governments have practical programs to help meet the current need for workers in this tight labour market. Here are a few programs that can be of assistance to business.

Information sources

The Labour Market Information page on the Alberta Employment and Immigration (E&I) website offers links to labour force statistics, forecasts, and wage and salary information. (employment.alberta.ca/lmi)

- The Central Alberta Economic Partnership (CAEP) website (www.centralalberta.ab.ca) has hundreds of links to information sources, and programs, including:
- Support for Training Workers
- Wage Subsidy Programs
- Recruiting Employees
- Employment Services in Central Alberta
- Foreign Worker Employer Guide

Seminars and networking

Employer Connections are held every Wednesday at the Labour Market Information Centre, 2nd Floor, First Red Deer Place, 4911-51 St. (across from the Provincial Building).

The meetings are an opportunity to meet job seekers, employment agencies and career counsellors.

Each week a single employer is showcased and presents their perspective.

To participate free of charge call (403) 340-4347 and ask for a Business and Industry Liaison.

Labour solutions

- Red Deer Aboriginal Employment Services. Ph. (403) 358-7734
- Career Assistance Network teams unemployed workers with employers. Ph. (403) 341-7811
- Employment Placement Support Services supports adults over 25, and persons with disabilities age 18 and over. Ph. (403) 343-6249
- Employment Access offers employment programs for clients with disabilities. Ph. (403) 341-2363
- DRES provides support and assistance to employers hiring people with disabilities. Contact the Canada-Alberta Service Centre in Red Deer. Ph. (403) 340-5353

Personalized help when needed

There are dozens of programs available to employers. E&I employees will visit the workplace and provide a summary of options and opportunities.

For example, they can direct managers to initiatives that will help their business.

For more information call (403) 340-4347 and ask for a Business and Industry Liaison.

Sign up free: We're live and online

This publication, In the News, (an electronic digest about regional business expansions, relocations and closures) and Finding Work In, which profiles different career opportunities, are available online at employment.alberta.ca/central.

A free subscription service will notify you by e-mail when the latest edition of each product comes out.

On the same web page there are Labour Market News products for Stettler, Wetaskiwin, Vermilion and Wainwright.

JOB SEEKER Resources

There are many resources in the central region that can be helpful to job seekers and workers alike.

Where to find us

This publication, In the News, (an electronic digest about regional business expansions, relocations and closures) and Finding Work In, which profiles different career opportunities, are available online at employment.alberta.ca/central.

A free subscription service will notify you by e-mail when the latest edition of each product comes out.

Job search and career websites

- www.jobbank.gc.ca **(Job listings, links and other services)**
- www.alis.gov.ab.ca **(Alberta Learning Information Service)**
- www.workopolis.ca **(Job listings)**
- www.monster.ca **(Job listings)**
- www.nextsteps.org **(Job resources for youth)**
- www.albertajobs.com **(Job listings)**
- www.hgcareers.com **(Job listings)**
- www.healthjobs.ab.ca **(Health care job listings)**

Job search and career information by phone

Alberta Career Information Hotline:

1-800-661-3753

Fax: (780) 422-0372 TDD: (780) 422-5283

Resumé review service

The Government of Alberta e-Resumé Review Service is a great way to have a resumé reviewed and improved, before sending it to employers.

To access the service, log on to www.alis.gov.ab.ca/hotline/resume and follow the instructions to send your resumé for review.

The service is free to residents of Alberta and those seeking work in Alberta.

Resources for labour market information

These websites offer a wealth of labour market information on Alberta and specific communities.

- employment.alberta.ca/lmi **(Alberta Employment and Immigration)**
- www.alis.gov.ab.ca **(Alberta Learning Information Service)**
- www.albertafirst.com **(Business and economic information)**
- www.centralalberta.ab.ca **(Central Alberta Economic Partnership)**
- www.alis.gov.ab.ca/employment/lmi/alberta.asp) **(Labour market information across Alberta)**
- www.labourmarketinformation.ca **(Service Canada)**

Seminars and networking

Employer Connections are held every Wednesday at the Labour Market Information Centre, 2nd Floor, First Red Deer Place, 4911-51 St. across from the Provincial Building.

The meetings are an opportunity to meet employers face to face.

New to Town?

Past issues of Labour Market News featured information for communities in Central Alberta.

See past bulletins for employment, social services, health care, transportation and other great resources available in your community.

City / Town	Month
Camrose	July 2007
Didsbury	October 2007
Drayton Valley	June 2007
Innisfail	September 2007
Lacombe	August 2007
Olds	February 2007
Ponoka	November 2007
Red Deer	January 2007
Rocky Mountain House	April 2007
Stettler	March 2007
Sylvan Lake	December 2007
Wetaskiwin	May 2007

LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION CENTRES

Labour Market Information Centres (LMIC's) provide information to help you make career, learning and work decisions. LMICs have books, magazines, newspapers, software and videos about employment-related topics.

There are LMIC's across Alberta. For a complete list, see: employment.alberta.ca/lmic.

LMIC's in Central Alberta:

Camrose Alberta Service Centre
3rd Flr., Gemini Centre, 6708 - 48 Ave.
Ph. (780) 608-2525

Drayton Valley Sub-Office
2nd Floor Provincial Building
5136 - 51 Ave. Ph. (780) 542-3134

Olds Alberta Service Centre
4905 - 50 Ave. Ph. (403) 507-8060

Red Deer Canada-Alberta Service Centre
2nd Floor First Red Deer Place, 4911 - 51 St.
Ph. (403) 340-5353

Rocky Mountain House Alberta Service Centre, 4919 - 51 St. Ph. (403) 845-8590

Stettler Alberta Service Centre
4835 - 50 St. Ph. (403) 742-7586

Wetaskiwin Alberta Service Centre
1st Floor Macadil Building
5201 - 51 Ave. Ph. (780) 361 1272

Lloydminster LMIC
5016 - 48 St. Ph. (780) 871-6445

Wainwright LMIC
810 - 14 Ave. Ph. (780) 842-7500

Vermilion LMIC
4701 - 52 St. Ph. (780) 853-8164